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STUDENT REPORT

THE LONG MARCH: VICTORY OR DEFEAT?

MAJOR CHARLES C. DUELL

88-0795

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REPORT NUMBER 88-0795

TITLE THE LONG MARCH: VICTORY OR DEFEAT?

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Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of
requirements for graduation.

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<p>Beginning in 1934, the Chinese Nationalist Party under Chiang Kai-shek initiated an offensive aimed at eradicating the Chinese Communist autonomous base in Kiangsi Province. The 100,000 men and women who were forced out of the Kiangsi base began what has come to be known as the Long March. Encompassing 368 days and 6,000 miles, their exodus is unparalleled in modern history. This study covers the events leading to the March, the Long March itself, and the period of the 1945-49 Chinese Civil War which brought the communists to power. Finally, the study attempts to derive results of the Long March which might have been significant factors in the communist victory in 1949.</p>					
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PREFACE

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the results of the legendary Long March of the Chinese Communist First Front Army and determine its impact on the communist victory in 1949. The author will contend that the Red Army leadership, tactics, and high morale were by-products of the Long March and were decisive factors in the final result of the Civil War between the Chinese Communists and Nationalist forces.

This paper will focus on the events leading to the beginning of the Long March, while introducing key players. The Long March itself will be covered, with emphasis on key battles, the continual struggle for political dominance, and the natural obstacles facing the marchers. The period of the Civil War will be covered in chronological order, emphasizing political and military actions occurring during that timeframe. Finally, the author will draw conclusions concerning the relationship between events occurring during the Long March and the outcome of the Civil War.

The author would like to express his appreciation to his wife, Marty, for her forbearance and her typing skills.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Charles C. Duell was commissioned through USAF Officers Training School in 1971. After completing Undergraduate Navigator Training in 1972, he was assigned to the 773rd Tactical Airlift Squadron, Dyess AFB, TX, flying C-130 E/H aircraft. While in this assignment, Major Duell served as a Navigator, Instructor Navigator, and Standardization/Evaluation Flight Examiner. Following a break in active duty from 1978 to 1981, Major Duell was assigned to the 34th Tactical Airlift Training Group, Little Rock AFB, AR. During the next three years, he served as an Instructor Navigator, an academic instructor, and finally, as the Course Manager for the Advanced Navigator Tactical Training Course. Entering the Rated Supplement in 1984, Major Duell was assigned to the Ogden Air Logistics Center, Hill AFB, UT, as a Logistics Plans Officer. While at Hill AFB, he served initially as the Installation Mobility Officer and, finally, as a Plans Officer with the Plans and Programs Directorate. From 1985 until his assignment to Air Command and Staff College, Major Duell was assigned to the Republic of Korea as the Plans Officer and the Executive Officer for the Materiel Support Division, Assistant Chief of Staff, J-4, United States Forces Korea/Eighth United States Army.

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Major Duell was a Distinguished Graduate from Squadron Officer School in 1977.

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REPORT NUMBER 88-0795

AUTHOR(S) MAJOR CHARLES C. DUELL, USAF

TITLE THE LONG MARCH: VICTORY OR DEFEAT?

I. Purpose: To establish lessons learned during, or results of, the 1934-35 Long March of the Chinese Communist First Front Army, which directly impacted on the final victory of the Chinese Communists in 1949.

II. Problem: The Long March of the Chinese Communist First Front Army was the result of a resounding defeat. The survivors, who encamped in a remote part of northern China in 1935, were devastated by the 90 percent casualties suffered during the March. Yet these survivors provided the impetus and the leadership for a popular revolution which, a scant 14 years later, defeated a vastly superior, western supported government which was still enjoying worldwide acclaim for its participation in the recent victory over Japan.

III. Data: In 1934 the Chinese Communist First Front Army was forced out of their autonomous base, the Kiangsi Soviet, by the overwhelming superiority of the Nationalist, or Kuomintang, forces under Chiang Kai-shek. The 100,000 members of the First Front Army who broke out of the Nationalist encirclement were to suffer tremendous hardships over the next 368 days. They were continually attacked and harassed by Nationalist ground and air forces. The rivers, mountains, deserts, and swamps which they were forced to contend with during the 6,000 mile exodus exacted a fearful toll. Equally devastating, the marchers

CONTINUED

suffered through several leadership crises which greatly added to their burden. The estimated 8,000 survivors of the March, isolated in northern China, appeared to be in the final stages of dissolution. In 1945, though, the Chinese Communist Party was very much alive. At the outset of the Civil War they faced an enemy with a tremendous superiority in manpower, materiel, and western support. Despite this imbalance, the communists survived the first years of the Civil War and even managed to inflict several defeats on Nationalist forces in Manchuria. In 1948 the tide turned dramatically in the communists' favor as they began to win major victories over Nationalist forces in northern and central China. The final victory in 1949 was almost anti-climactic, as the corrupt and decadent Nationalist Government collapsed rapidly and fled to Taiwan in December.

IV. Conclusion: The defeat of the Long March was actually the precursor to the final communist victory in 1949. The ascendancy of Mao Tse-tung to the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, the re-introduction of guerilla tactics and mobile warfare, and the resulting renewed revolutionary zeal and dedication of the March survivors were all by-products of the Long March and direct contributors to the defeat of the Nationalist Government. For military leaders of today, the communist victory is a re-affirmation of the basic tenet that highly motivated troops, executing the proper tactics, under able leadership, can overcome significant manpower and materiel shortages.

V. Recommendation: The present Air Force emphasis on professional reading and study should be continued. In today's era of reliance on science and technology, and where US and NATO forces face a vastly superior enemy on the European continent, study of historical triumphs such as the Long March strongly reinforce the timeless adage of Clausewitz, "The value of the moral powers, and their frequently incredible influence, are best exemplified by history" (3:252).

GLOSSARY

- ANNIHILATION CAMPAIGN - These were a series of offensives orchestrated by Chiang Kai-shek in an attempt to eradicate the Chinese Communists. Five of these offensives were conducted prior to the Long March, while the sixth and seventh were conducted subsequent to the First Front Army's arrival in Shensi Province.
- COMINTERN - Short for Communist International, the true name is the Third Socialist International. Originating in 1919, the purpose of the Comintern was coordinating between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and revolutionary communist groups in other countries. The Comintern was officially disbanded in 1949.
- KUOMINTANG - Also known as the Nationalist Party, this political party was formed in 1911 after the Chinese Republican Revolution. It established three short-lived governments under Sun Yat-sen between 1917-23. After a brief alliance with the communists, beginning in 1923, they split in 1927. Still in existence on Taiwan, the Nationalists claim to be the sole government of China.
- SOVIET - Used by the Chinese Communists to denote an autonomous communist base area. A soviet contained a complete political, administrative, and military infrastructure.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

The rise of many great nations has been marked by events, which in retrospect, attain legendary, if not mythical proportions. The signing of the Magna Carta, the Battle of the Alamo, the storming of the Bastille, and the siege of the Winter Palace were of such significance that they became indelibly carved into the national characters of the respective populations. In our own history, the bitter winter at Valley Forge transformed the Continental Army. The army entered those winter quarters a beaten, disorganized rabble. It emerged as a tempered, cohesive force which dramatically altered the course of the American Revolution.

The Long March of the Chinese Communist First Front Army rivals, and in many cases exceeds, the hardships and political significance of the events mentioned above. General Samuel B. Griffith, an acknowledged military historian, described it as:

an even more majestic achievement than the retreat of the 10,000 Greeks from Persia to the Black Sea four centuries before Christ: 'the Chinese Communists repeatedly tested and confirmed man's ability to undergo indescribable hardship, to overcome every challenge placed in his path by a nature determined to thwart him; to triumph over enemies equally determined to destroy him; and to reach his goal. Alike, Greeks and Chinese endured scorching heat, bitter cold, thirst and hunger. Alike, they climbed snow-covered mountains, ate roots, slept in the snow, marched and fought and marched again. Alike, they reconciled internal disputes that threatened to tear them apart. Alike, they survived.' But Mao's Chinese marched 6,000 miles to Xenophon's Greek's 2,000; they marched for a year, not merely four months; they were ten times more numerous than the Greeks; and their survival had infinitely more historical significance.... (10:xiv).

Like the Continental Army which emerged from Valley Forge, the Red Army was transformed during the Long March into the tool that Mao Tse-tung used to successfully complete his revolution.

The Long March was the result of a military defeat. An army does not march 6,000 miles and suffer 90 percent casualties as the result of a victory. By October, 1934, Chiang Kai-shek's Fifth Annihilation Campaign had brought the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to the very brink of extinction. "According to Kuomintang sources...nearly one million people were killed,

or starved to death in the hermetically sealed Red pockets" (6:127). Yet 15 years later, the Chinese Communists were masters of all China.

What happened during the Long March which brought about this amazing conversion? This paper will attempt to answer that question.

First, it will provide a background of the situation prior to the Long March. It will outline the leadership and organization of the CCP. Additionally, insights will be provided into the strategies employed by the Kuomintang, or Nationalist Party, under Chiang Kai-shek.

Secondly, it will discuss the events which occurred during the Long March. It will provide details of the March and introduce a few of the marchers. Most importantly, the ascendancy of Mao Tse-tung to the leadership of the CCP will be discussed.

Thirdly, it will outline the period of the Chinese Civil War, 1945-49. The political and military situations of the CCP and the Kuomintang at the end of WW II will be analyzed. It will then discuss the events leading to the CCP victory in 1949.

Finally, through an analysis of these three periods, it will attempt to derive some lessons learned during the Long March which enabled the CCP to engineer such a remarkable recovery. To begin with, though, it is necessary to understand the magnitude of the defeat which the CCP was facing in the fall of 1934.

Chapter Two

THE DEFEAT

In many ways, 1934 marked the low-water point for the CCP. They had been pushed out of the cities and into the countryside, separating them from the traditional Marxist power base, the urban industrial worker. They were facing a leadership crisis as Russian trained, traditional Marxist cadres tried to build a "doctrinally correct" revolution in a country demographically unable to support such a revolution. Finally, they were being hemmed in by Chiang Kai-shek's Fifth Annihilation Campaign which was particularly effective due to new Kuomintang tactics and CCP leadership failures. The retreat of the CCP leadership to the Kiangsi Soviet marked the beginning of this unsuccessful period.

THE KIANGSI SOVIET

The Kiangsi Soviet was initiated by Mao Tse-tung in 1927. Under orders from CCP Headquarters in Shanghai, Mao had instigated an urban uprising in Changsha, which later became known as the Autumn Harvest Uprising. Despite initial success, the uprising was soon crushed by Kuomintang forces. The defeat at Changsha marked the divergence of Mao and the Comintern dominated Marxists of the central CCP. A major reason for the failure of the Changsha uprising was the lack of support from the Shanghai leadership. They believed "the uprising was not dogmatically correct" (6:198). It depended too much on peasants and Kuomintang deserters while not adequately representing the urban workers. Toward the end of the Autumn Harvest Uprising, Mao was "repudiated by his own superiors in the CCP and attacked by local communists who were jealous of his growing personal power" (6:198). Mao's failure at Changsha was not an isolated incident. The CCP was suffering reverses all over China as they attempted to foment an orthodox Marxist revolution. "A politically immature and inexperienced communist party allowed itself to become shackled to the policies of the Comintern" (5:29).

Mao's failure at Changsha and subsequent expulsion from the Politburo forced him to retreat, with about 1,000 loyal troops, to the mountains of Chingkangshan. His new stronghold was isolated from the CCP hierarchy and allowed him to practice his own theories regarding the proper way to conduct a revolution in China. It was here "that the Maoist strategy of a rural based revolution had its origins" (5:31). Mao believed that China did not have sufficient urban workers to fuel a revolution, and that the support of the rural peasant was required for a revolution to succeed. In Chingkangshan he successfully implemented his theory. In addition, it was during this time that Chu

Teh joined Mao. Chu Teh was to provide the military genius which turned Mao's theories into practical successes. According to Robert Payne, "the theory, as it relates to battle, seems to be pure Mao; the practices, the knowledge of the possible...seems to come from Chu Teh" (10:38).

While Mao and Chu Teh prospered in southern Kiangsi Province, other communist efforts in the cities continued to suffer reverses. The brutality of the Kuomintang while putting down the 1927 uprisings had induced such fear in the general populace that it continually plagued efforts to generate further uprisings. Their continued failure placed Mao in the enviable position of having one of the very few Chinese Communist success stories. Although "the Shanghai Party Centre was against the establishment of Red political power in the provinces" (6:115), they did rely heavily on the Kiangsi Soviet for revenue. Because of this reliance, they continued to support the soviet even as they disapproved of Mao and his practices.

Mao's period of isolation and independence came to an end in 1931. By this time his soviet had expanded to encompass the southern half of Kiangsi Province and, with the help of Chu Teh, his armies had repelled the first three of Chiang Kai-shek's annihilation campaigns. In contrast, the Shanghai leadership was under increasing pressure from the Kuomintang. The result of these two trends was the relocation of Central Party Headquarters to Juichin, in Kiangsi Province, and the official formation of the Kiangsi Soviet.

THE LEADERSHIP

"After the arrival of the Shanghai Communist leaders at the Juichin headquarters of the Central Soviet Government, Mao Tse-tung was for years like a tight-rope walker, whose ropes are being slackened by some of his enemies, while others throw stones at him, or try to make him fall" (6:123).

The initial challenge to Mao's undisputed leadership came from Chou En-lai. Chou had been a leader in the Chinese Communist student movement in both France and Germany. He had barely escaped from Shanghai in 1927, when Chiang Kai-shek ordered the massacre of communists in that city. He was subsequently elected to the Central Committee and to the Party Secretary-Generalship. "Thereafter he remained one of the top three in the party hierarchy through all its changes....He was simply more skillful in sensing political currents, assessing factional realities and handling personal relations" (10:49). In 1931, Chou En-lai was the first of the Shanghai leadership to transfer to Kiangsi Province. This was to be the beginning of a three-year struggle between Chou and Mao for political dominance. The initial dispute concerned military matters. Despite the previous successes of Mao's guerilla tactics, Chou (along with the Comintern and the central party leadership) "wanted positional warfare to be used in fighting the enemy and holding the base" (6:49). The combination of Chou's political skill and the backing of the party leadership quickly gave him the upper hand. In 1932 he forced Mao from the Military Committee of the Party's Central Bureau for Soviet Areas. In April, 1933, he deposed Mao as the Chief Political Commissar of the Red Army.

During this same period, Kuomintang pressure forced the remainder of the central party leadership to relocate to the Kiangsi Soviet. They were led by Po Ku, one of a group of Bolshevik students trained in Russia (this group is often referred to as the "Returned Students"). But the most influential, and controversial, of the new leaders did not even arrive in China until 1933.

The newest Comintern representative to the Chinese Communists was a former German and Russian army officer known as Li-teh. A blonde, blue-eyed Aryan, Li-teh spoke no Chinese and was described as a "typical German, rigid and pedantic" (7:38). Being Russian trained, and the representative of the Comintern, Li-teh could not help but support the dogmatically Marxist positions of Po Ku and Chou En-lai. In addition, his foreign military training and his authoritarian bearing allowed him to hold unusual sway over the Kiangsi decision making process.

The period from 1933 until his triumph during the Long March "represented the nadir of Mao's fortunes and following in Kiangsi" (10:49). The trio of Po Ku, Li-teh, and Chou En-lai effectively held the reins of power. Chou's tactics had managed to stalemate Chiang Kai-shek's Fourth Annihilation Campaign in 1933, although at heavy cost to communist forces.

Forced to pay homage to Mao's still considerable personal prestige, the trio managed to relegate him to a figurehead position as Chief of the Soviet Government, in virtual exile in a farmhouse miles from the real seat of power. "It was in this atmosphere that the stratagems to deprive Mao of power, to restrict his influence, to ship him to Moscow or expel him from the Communist Party, flourished" (7:43). These efforts might have succeeded if it had not been for the failure of communist efforts to repel Chiang Kai-shek's Fifth Annihilation Campaign.

THE KUOMINTANG OFFENSIVE

The Fifth Encirclement which began in August 1933 was a formidable operation. Chiang Kai-shek had about a million men at his disposal, backed up by an air force of four hundred aeroplanes and an immense arsenal. He had just secured a fifty million dollar wheat loan from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, and he had the moral support of all of the Western powers (10:53).

Ironically, Adolph Hitler also played a major part in the success of this offensive. He detached one of the ablest generals from the German General Staff, Hans Von Seeckt, to assist Chiang Kai-shek in planning and executing his anti-communist campaign. It was Von Seeckt who devised the "Blockhouse Strategy" which was to prove to be the undoing of the CCP and the Kiangsi Soviet.

The blockhouse strategy consisted of two phases. Initially, Von Seeckt moved his Nationalist forces forward very slowly. As they advanced, they

built fortifications and pillboxes which controlled every road and path. Slowly but surely they forged a chain around the Kiangsi Soviet. As it grew tighter, it stifled communist trade. The communists suffered shortages of kerosene, cotton cloth, and salt (7:17).

In conjunction with the new strategy of the Kuomintang, the Chinese Communists were still employing the fixed, defensive tactics of Chou En-lai and Li-teh. These tactics could not have been better for Chiang Kai-shek and Von Seeckt. Communist forces did not have the firepower or manpower to effectively deal with Kuomintang forces in set-piece, large unit battles. The decisive battle of Kuangch'ang is a case in point. Although both sides lost approximately 8,000 men and the Kuomintang forces were held off, Chiang Kai-shek could easily replace these losses. The Chinese Communists could not. The gradual attrition and increasing deprivation of communist forces allowed Von Seeckt to initiate the second phase of his offensive.

The second phase consisted of a strategic offensive. It began early in 1934 "when militia units were ordered to guard the blockhouses while regular troops were transferred to offensive duties" (1:207). This phase quickened the pace of the encirclement of the Kiangsi Soviet, putting unbearable pressure on the already depleted communist forces.

At this point, the communists were forced to revert to hit-and-run guerrilla tactics. "But the revival of guerilla warfare at this stage of the struggle was chiefly for diversionary purposes. It was intended to gain time for eventual evacuation of the central soviet...." (1:208). A small unit, Fang Chih-min's 10th Corps, was directed to divert Kuomintang attention as planning for the breakout from the encircled soviet was initiated. The Long March was about to begin.

Chapter Three

THE LONG MARCH

The approximately 100,000 men and women of the Chinese Communist First Front Army who left the Kiangsi Soviet on 14 October 1934, faced two formidable foes during the Long March. Militarily:

The main body of the March...was for 368 days constantly under reconnaissance, machine gunning and bombing from the air. They were pursued, obstructed and intercepted, attacked and encircled by several hundred thousand Kuomintang troops, and in addition had to fight the armies of ten war-lords in twelve different provinces....They fought more than two hundred battles and hardly a day passed without a skirmish or two (6:128).

In addition to the almost daily confrontations with a numerically superior enemy, the ill-clothed, ill-equipped and under-fed marchers had to conquer some of the most severe natural obstacles China had to offer. Finally, the political leadership of the CCP, faced with these same dangers, fought another battle which had even more significance for the future of China. "The few dozen leaders had in addition to fight the most bitter and dangerous battles of their lives for their political survival" (6:129). In retrospect, the most important battles fought during the Long March may have been the ones fought entirely within the ranks of the CCP. Initially, though, the most immediate threat to the survival of the First Front Army was a military one.

THE BREAKOUT

The first phase of the March constituted some of the fiercest fighting which would be seen. Chiang Kai-shek had assembled nearly 750,000 troops in his effort to finally eradicate the communists. The Long March would begin with a desperate battle for survival.

The first, and costliest, confrontation between the First Front Army and Kuomintang forces took place shortly after the lightly contested breakout to the southwest. The surprising ease with which the communists successfully conducted the first phase of the breakout can be attributed to several factors. First, preparations were made during darkness and the cover of heavy weather. Secondly, the direction of march seemed to confuse the Kuomintang. "The enemy was bewildered, supposing that the Red Army would strike north...." (10:76). Finally, the direction of march not only confused the enemy, it took

the First Front Army into an area controlled by Chiang Kai-shek's least reliable forces. There is evidence which indicates that a deal may have been struck contributing to the ease with which the communists broke through the first three Kuomintang fortification lines. Xu Menqui, the first Red Army historian, stated in 1938, that the warlords in Kiangsi Province had "promised to leave a thirteen mile corridor open" (7:94). The combination of these factors allowed a relatively easy passage until 25 November, when the First Front Army reached Chiang's fourth, and last, fortification line along the Hsiang River.

Two reasons can be cited for the excessive casualties suffered by the First Front Army during the crossing of the Hsiang River. First, by 25 November, Chiang Kai-shek had finally discerned the direction of the breakout and he was able to begin reinforcing the Hsiang River crossings with reliable troops. But the most significant reason may have been the initial formation adopted by the communists during the breakout. Preparations for leaving the Kiangsi Soviet had included stripping the arsenals and factories of equipment deemed essential for operating the next soviet government. Printing presses, x-ray machines, minting equipment, all were broken down and packed out by thousands of porters. This cumbersome, slow moving baggage train, along with the headquarters component, was protected by a box-like formation covering all sides. The slowness of the over-burdened baggage train was to hamstring the First Front Army in its drive to cross the Hsiang River.

The main problem, as Mao saw it, was that "the elephantine columns of the Military Commission [central column] added to the logistical and operational difficulties and turned all combat units into covering units" (10:79). Advance units made it to the river in good order and began crossing against light opposition. "The whole force should have been over the river in two or three days, with minimal losses" (7:96). But the slowness of the central column, with the baggage train stretching 50 miles behind, was to destroy that opportunity. Beginning on the 27th, several units reaching the river were not allowed to cross due to the need to protect the crossing. Kuomintang forces were beginning to apply enormous pressure. In addition, warlord forces which had previously stayed clear of the fighting were now forced by Chiang Kai-shek to join the offensive. The crossing soon became an intense struggle. "In later years, Nie Rongzhen, political commissar of the First Front Army, would look back on November 30 and December 1, 1934, as the most dangerous days of the Long March" (7:100).

The battle at the Hsiang River lasted from 25 November until 3 December. Although the main force managed to cross, it was at a terrible cost to rear-guard units. "The Young Communist International Division was lost, the Thirty-fourth Division was lost, the Eighteenth Regiment was lost and so were important elements of the Eighth Army" (7:102).

Communist losses at the Hsiang River have been estimated between 15,000 (7:103) and 50,000 (10:78). In any case, it was not a price they could afford to pay again.

Despite the heavy losses, there were three results of the battle which would pay dividends. First, the encirclement was broken and the breakout complete. The marchers now had a little room to operate and some time to breathe. Secondly, the results of the Hsiang River battle convinced the First Front Army to relieve itself of excessive equipment which had overburdened the baggage train. Many communist battlefield successes during the remainder of the Long March would be highlighted by their now superior mobility. Finally, the battle of the Hsiang River marked the beginning of the end for the leadership of Po Ku and Li-Teh. "The battle hard commanders of the Red Army emerged from the Hsiang catastrophe with indignation and rage, which crystallized into powerful sentiment for change" (7:104).

TSUNYI

The next phase of the Long March would be earmarked by a political struggle which would have momentous implications for the future of China.

Although successfully free of Chiang Kai-shek's encirclement, "the Red Army was still on the run without a clear goal in view" (10:79). Blocked by 200,000 Nationalist troops to the north, the communists continued west. On 11 December, they captured Tongdao, where for the first time in two years, Mao was invited to a meeting of the Military Commission. He took an active part in the discussion, proposing they continue westward into southern Kweichow Province. His proposal was adopted. "The Chinese were rallying toward Mao and forming ranks against their German Comintern advisor" (7:111). Li-ping was captured on 16 December and an enlarged Politburo meeting was held on 18 December. Little is known for certain about this meeting, but it was evidently decided to continue into Kweichow Province and capture the town of Tsunyi. In addition, it was here "that Mao may have regained a de facto seat on the Central Committee" (10:83).

The route to Tsunyi presented only one major obstacle, the Wu River. Vanguard units reached the river 1 January, 1935, and found a 250-yard wide river with an extremely swift current. In addition, three regiments of Kuomintang troops were entrenched on the far side. Only after 48 hours of hard fighting was the First Front Army able to cross the Wu in force. Tsunyi was captured on 7 January with very little fighting. This was due to a clever deception perpetrated by the 6th Regiment of the 2nd Division.

About ten miles from Tsunyi, they captured a local battalion to the last man. With a combination of guile and practicality, they persuaded their prisoners to lend a hand. They gave the men pep talks, a few threats, and three silver dollars each. After midnight they arrived at the gates of Tsunyi. The communists and their new allies shouted and chanted, blew their bugles, made a great fuss, and proclaimed they were the remnants of a defense battalion being pursued by the Red Army. Within an half hour they were inside the city walls (7:116).

On 9 January the CCP leadership arrived in Tsunyi. "Here the main force

of the Red Army rested for twelve days and recruited more than 4,000 soldiers" (6:134). But the real significance of Tsunyi would be political. On 15 January an enlarged meeting of the Politburo of the Party Central Committee was called. "As it turned out, this was the most important Politburo meeting in the party's entire history, for it dramatically reversed party policy and reshuffled its leadership in favour of Mao Tse-tung, the man who remained thereafter its dominating personality and who led it into power fifteen years later" (10:91).

Mao was able to finally take de facto power of the CCP because of two important events. The first was the disaster at the Hsiang River. The memory of the terrible losses and near disaster weighed more heavily than political considerations. Secondly, and probably more important, was "the fact that the brilliantly flexible Chou En-lai suddenly decided to join the Mao-Chu Teh bandwagon. This assured Mao's success" (6:134).

The importance of the Tsunyi conference cannot be overstated. In addition to elevating Mao to the top of the CCP, it finally provided the Long March with a clear goal. It was here that it was decided that "the Red Army [would] shift its course, fight its way across the Yangtze, and in northern Szechuan set up a new base" (7:126). Also, the conference reaffirmed the requirement for the Red Army to conduct mobile warfare if it was to be successful. One of Mao's Fourteen Resolutions adopted at Tsunyi stated "we must check the enemy with mobile warfare while our main forces should retreat to a suitable distance or transfer themselves to the enemy's flank or rear" (10:93). Finally, it was a watershed in another way. "It was a declaration of the independence of the Chinese Communist movement, independence from the overlordship of Moscow" (7:130). Finally the Chinese Communist revolution was in Chinese hands.

"The military character of the Long March altered after Tsunyi" (10:110). The ranks were much leaner now, with only about 45 or 50,000 troops remaining in the First Front Army. This was not entirely bad as, for the first time, there were almost as many rifles as soldiers. In addition, they had been well rested by the extended stay in Tsunyi. They had eaten their fill and many of them had obtained new clothes and, most importantly, new sandals. Rice bags had been refilled and medical stores replenished. Finally, "with Mao in command, the troops felt at ease" (7:129). The Mao-Chu Teh team, which had proven so successful before, was back together.

Despite these reasons for optimism, the next leg of the Long March was to provide the First Front Army with some of its sternest tests and, for Mao, yet another potentially deadly political challenge.

THE FOURTH ROUTE ARMY

"Mao's aim now was apparently to strike into Szechuan and set up a new soviet area there in collaboration with the Fourth [Route] Army already established under Chang Kuo-tao" (10:110).

Mao's first problem was to get across the Yangtze River. The initial attempt to move north across the Yangtze ended in failure. Not only were the approaches too heavily defended, but Mao's hope of receiving aid from the Fourth Route Army were dashed when, under mounting pressure from the Kuomintang, the Fourth Route Army had to flee Szechuan Province to the mountains leading to Tibet. "Chang Kuo-tao was henceforth labeled as a flightist in Mao's book" (10:115).

This futile attempt resulted in the recapture of Tsunyi five weeks later on 27 February. In March, after a feint north toward the Yangtze, the First Front Army doubled back, and after crossing the Wu River for the last time, drove south toward Kweiyang, the capital of Kweichow Province. This move forced Chiang Kai-shek to order troops from Yunnan Province to the defense of Kweiyang. "Chiang had, in effect, opened the path for Mao to streak to the River of Golden Sands" (7:164). (The River of Golden Sands is still the Yangtze River, but the name changes as it moves into southwest China.)

The First Front Army once again shifted course and marched west toward Yunnan Province. "Mao's tactics drove the Kuomintang commanders dizzy. But Mao was acting on the hardest kind of realism....The only reasonable policy left to Mao for going north was the River of Golden Sands" (7:170). The communists now drove west out of Kweichow, across the Beipan River and into Yunnan Province. They were now constantly on the move. "Once more the communists made a successful feint, this time at the Yunnan capital of Kunming, which drew the enemy's attention away from their real objective" (10:117). With Lin Piao's First Army Group moving noisily toward Kunming, the main force moved northwest toward the River of Golden Sands. By 1 May, the Cadres Regiment had secured the first crossing site at Jiaopingdu. Mao then wired Lin Piao to join the main force. Lin Piao's First Army Group covered the 100 miles of open country in 48 hours. "They moved so fast that they lost many stragglers. The men simply could not keep up the pace. They lagged behind and many were captured and shot on the spot by the Kuomintang" (7:181). The army completed the crossing by 8 May. The First Front Army was finally in Szechuan headed north. Having greatly outdistanced the enemy, the marchers had now only "to cope with the difficulties of the terrain and the vagaries of the climate" (6:140).

After a brief Politburo meeting at Hweili, it was decided to head north through the land of the Yi people toward the Tatu River. The Yi tribe was a fierce group, greatly feared by the surrounding Han Chinese. It was here that the communist's enlightened policy toward minorities paid its greatest dividend. "It [the First Front Army] treated them with great consideration trying to compensate them for past Han savagery and win them over" (7:187). They were, for the most part, successful and made the 300-mile trek through the land of the Yi with very few incidents.

The vanguard of Lin Piao's First Army Group reached the main crossing of the Tatu River, Anshunchang, on 24 May. There were three possible places where the marchers might possibly cross the swift, mountainous Tatu. One was the ferry at Anshunchang, another was the ferry crossing at Fulin and, finally, there was the iron suspension bridge at Luting. Although all were

eventually captured, the capture of the Luting bridge produced one of the great stories of the Long March. "Mao and his men did not start out for the Luting bridge. The plan was to cross at Anshunchang, the customary ferry from west to east" (7:223). But the slowness of the ferry crossing plus constant air attacks by the Kuomintang, made the capture of an alternate crossing imperative. The Fourth Shock Regiment, under Chang Cheng-wu (later to be the Acting Chief of Staff of the People's Liberation Army during the Cultural Revolution) was given the task of capturing the bridge. The Fourth Shock Regiment made the 90-mile march to the Luting bridge in a little over 48 hours. This was an heroic feat in itself. The mountainous route alternated between narrow trails, footholds, and no path at all. They fought three pitched battles and rebuilt a bridge destroyed by retreating enemy troops. They arrived at the bridge at dawn on 27 May. The bridge consisted of 13 iron chains, suspended between two cliffs, approximately 250 feet above the river. Two-thirds of the wooden planks which made up the walkway had been removed by the defenders. Protecting the bridge were two regiments of Kuomintang troops, across the river, in the town of Luting. When the attack began, the Kuomintang began to lay down heavy machine gun and mortar fire. The actual assault was made by 22 volunteers, armed only with pistols and hand grenades, swinging hand over hand across the chains. In the end the defenders broke and fled. "Eighteen of the twenty-two men survived the suicide attack, came through unscathed, a single act of bravery that ensured Mao's calvary would be a triumph and not a disaster" (7:229).

After his dash across the Tatu, Mao rested his troops for approximately ten days while he decided their next route. Now only 100 miles from linking up with the Fourth Route Army in northwest Szechuan, Mao had three possible routes. Two could be fairly easily traveled but offered a significant possibility for attack by hostile Tibetan or Kuomintang forces. Mao chose the third option, a rough trail over the Great Snow Mountains. "Mao's established preference had been well demonstrated: in case of doubt, take the small road, the back trail" (7:234). This was to be a costly decision. "Thousands of men and pack animals perished during this mountaineering feat" (6:141).

The First Front Army was ill-prepared for such a crossing. Most did not have suitable clothing for traversing the snow-covered, 16,000-foot pass. In addition, the change in diet had weakened many. Forced now to switch from their native rice diet to the local corn, many had severe diarrhea. Upon reaching the summit, many of the underdressed, thin-blooded southerners died of exposure. "To most of the Red Army men the Snowies were the worst experience the Long March had yet presented" (7:239). One survivor related:

The last peak in the range, which we estimated to be eighty li (twenty-seven miles) from base to summit, was terrible. Hundreds of our men died there. They would sit down to rest or relieve themselves, and never get up. All along the route we kept reaching down to pull men to their feet only to find that they were already dead (10:178).

Lead elements began descending from the mountains on 11 June. On 12 June the long awaited link-up with the Fourth Route Army had finally arrived. For

many this was an event calling for celebration, but for Mao this was to be another stern political test.

Mao and Chang Kuo-tao met for the first time on 25 June. "The outward trappings of celebration were present....But underneath-and not far underneath-there ran a current of bitterness, hostility, suspicion" (7:243). While the common soldiers rested from their ordeal, the leaders met in continuous political debate. "The struggle for personal power was expressed in a series of violent disputes over the general policies of the Chinese Communists" (6:142). Mao was at somewhat of a disadvantage in this conflict. Not only was Chang Kuo-tao's Fourth Route Army in much better physical condition than Mao's First Front Army, it was, at this point, significantly larger. Although subject to debate, First Front Army was probably down to approximately 10,000 men (7:244), while the Fourth could muster approximately 50,000 (10:189). Chang Kuo-tao used this disparity to good advantage during the endless debates. "He was even arrogant enough to point to the good condition of his 50,000 troops and to the losses and poor conditions of ours, by which he implied that he was the only man capable of leading the Red Army" (10:191).

In the end, Mao's support base of First Front Army generals and the Kiangsi-based Politburo proved to be too strong for Chang. Mao's proposal to continue north to eventually establish a soviet in the remote area of Shensi Province was adopted. But some compromises were required. Chang was to become Vice-chairman of the Military Commission. "The united armies were reorganized into a West Column and an East Column [with units from each army intermingled]....The two armies were thus divided, but Mao's was preponderant in the East Column and Chang's in the West. Each leader, to put it another way, gave hostages to the other" (10:196).

Chu Teh went with Chang's column. The reason for Chu Teh's departure with the West Column is one of the great mysteries of the Long March. Theories range from "Chu Teh was more or less physically detained by Chang and his entourage" (6:143) to "Chu Teh was tired of playing second fiddle to Mao Tse-tung" (10:197) to "Chu genuinely saw himself as the only possible mediator in a power struggle that threatened to defeat the communist's entire chance of survival" (10:197). What ever the reason, it does indicate that Mao's position at this point was not as secure as he would have wished. "Mao later confessed that this confrontation with Chang Kuo-tao was the darkest moment of his life" (10:195). However unsettled the situation was, though, growing Kuomintang pressure forced the now united Red Army to quit debating and resume their march.

SHENSI

"The Red Army was now moving back of the beyond, deeper and deeper into what the English explorer Sir Eric Teichman once called the least known area of China. The country was unmapped, unexplored, uninhabited and uninhabitable" (7:253).

The two columns now advanced toward Maoerhkai, occupying it on 10 July. Although on the move again, it was "still a time of intense political

maneuvering between Mao Tse-tung and Chang Kuo-tao" (7:259). The final chapter of this dispute was about to be played out.

The intense political debates continued at Maoerkhai well into August. Chang Kuo-tao continued to argue against Shensi as the final destination, preferring instead to move west. The final meeting was held on 20 August at Shuwa, about seven miles from Maoerkhai. Once again Mao carried the day and once again, with basic political differences unresolved, Kuomintang pressure forced a move. "About August 23, the two columns got under way. By agreement, the Left [West] Column for Alpa, the Right [East] Column for Baxi, several days' march distant" (7:262).

The two columns were now on the edge of the Grasslands, separated by the White River. It was here that the final split occurred.

The first sign of acute crisis had come September 3, when Chang sent a wireless that he could not get over the White River because of flooding. He ordered all troop movement to halt and proposed abandoning the expedition to the north and east and going back to his original idea of the west and south. Chang's telegram caused consternation in Mao's camp (7:274).

Message traffic flew back and forth as tensions rose. There is some unsubstantiated evidence indicating Chang contemplated a military solution to bring Mao and the First Front Army to heel. Although never proven, "It was a very dangerous moment in the history of the Red Army" (7:279).

The impasse was finally resolved when Chang "declared that the river could not be crossed and that the column had no alternative but to turn back into Sikang Province-which was what he had intended to do all along" (10:200). It would be many months before Chu Teh and the other elements of the First Front Army attached to Chang's column would be able to rejoin Mao.

Mao and his column were now left with little choice but to begin their march east through the Grasslands. This episode is described by a modern historian as "undoubtedly the most difficult episode in the history of logistics" (10:204). The Grasslands were an endless swamp which would take five to seven days to cross. "Day after day the Red Army saw nothing but an endless ocean of high wild grass growing in an icy swamp of black mud and water many feet deep" (10:204). One marcher, in describing the water, said it "looked like horse's urine and gave off a vile smell which made people vomit" (10:206). The misery was increased by the cold. "This floral paradise enjoyed only five frost free days a year, the average annual temperature was just over freezing" (7:264). There was no food to be had, and, "In the central part of the Grasslands they could not sleep on the ground because of the water, so they had to stand all night leaning against each other to keep warm" (10:206). There was no way to account for the people lost crossing the Grasslands. Exposure and dysentery took their toll. Many simply fell in the bog and disappeared. But at least, for the decimated First Front Army, the worst was over.

Mao now assembled the remainder of his army and raced east toward the Latzukou Pass, the last opportunity Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang had to stop the First Front Army from reaching sanctuary. Once again, the now legendary Fourth Shock Regiment got the assignment of forcing the pass. Commissar Yang's motivational speech to his troops told the whole story. "If we don't break through we must go back to the Grasslands" (7:283). In a night assault on 16 September, the Fourth Shock Regiment drove two defending Kuomintang Battalions out of the pass and the First Front Army streamed through.

The last 250 miles were almost a festival. "No longer were they a ragged, quarreling band fleeing for their lives....They were turning the Long March into victory" (7:287). On 20 October, 1935, the 8,000 (10:227) survivors of the Long March reached the Shensi Soviet, where many were to spend the next 12 years.

It may never be known how many actually lost their lives during the Long March. "If one assumes that about one-third of these [survivors] were recruits taken on during the March, this means that of the 100,000 men who left Kiangsi on 16 October, 1934, only about 5,000, and perhaps even fewer, survived the full length" (10:227). But not all of those missing were casualties. Some had simply dropped out, some wounded had to be left behind and, most importantly, many had been left in key areas as activists.

For Mao, the travails of the Long March had not dimmed his vision of the revolution. Entire sets of scenery and trunks of costumes were carried the length of the March so that, in every small village along the way, plays and songs could be performed extolling the virtue of the revolution and the glory of the Red Army. Wherever an audience could be raised, men who had fought and marched all day, gave up precious sleep to conduct political meetings. Mao himself wrote of the Long March only a few weeks after its end. "It is a manifesto, an agitation corps, a seeding machine" (6:145). No one knows how many of these "seeds" Mao left behind, but they were to pay enormous dividends in the years to come.

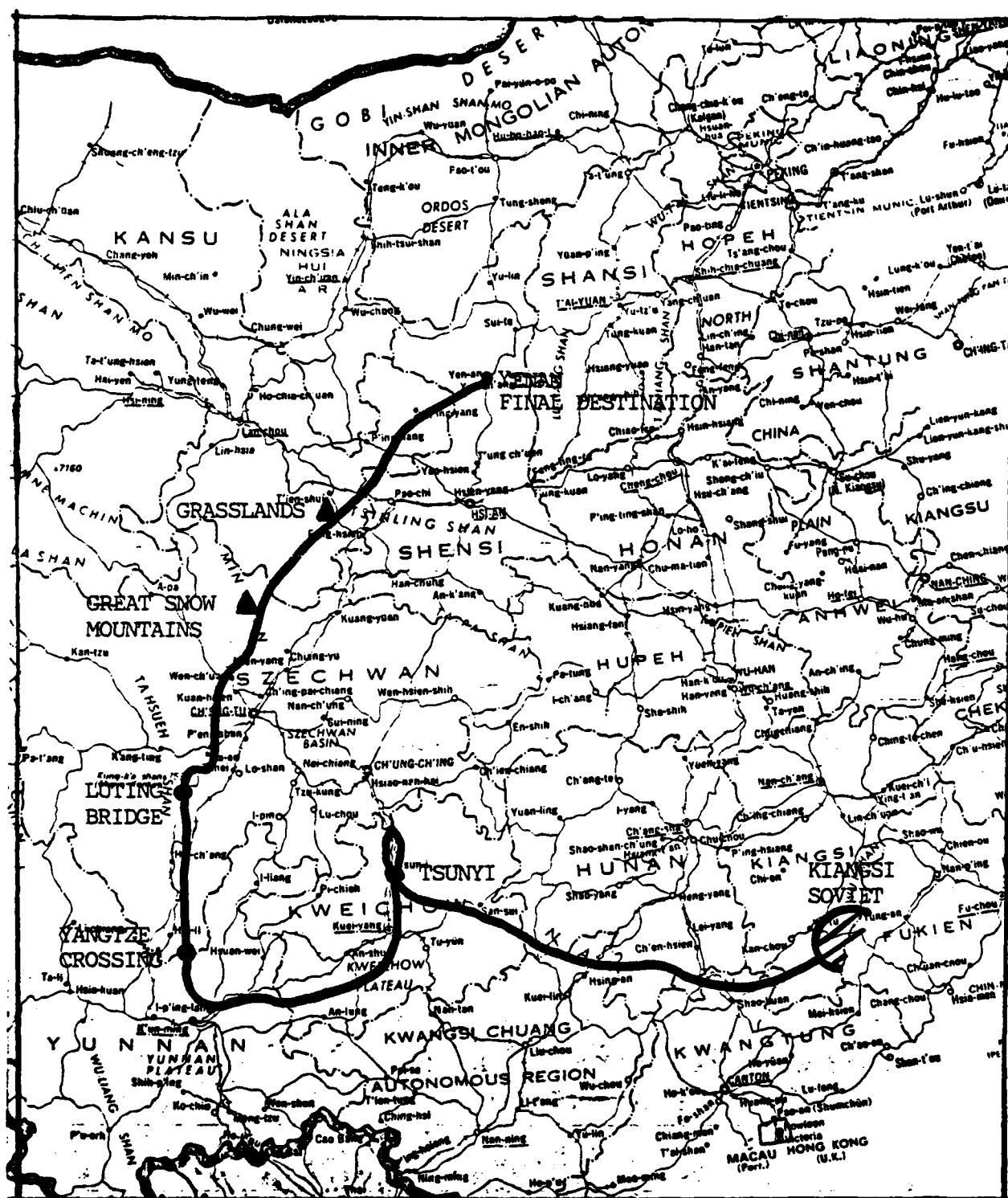


Figure 1 - The Route of the Long March

Source: The Times Atlas of the World, Mid-Century Ed. New York, NY: The Times Press, 1958.

Chapter Four

CIVIL WAR

For Mao Tse-tung, the work which began during the Changsha uprising in 1927 was about to bear fruit. The political and military setbacks at the Kiangsi Soviet and the mental and physical punishment of the Long March had prepared Mao and the leaders of the CCP for the final test.

The end of WW II was just the opening act for the war which, in all actuality, Mao and Chiang Kai-shek had been preparing all along to fight. The next four years, 1945 to 1949, were to see the Red Army transform from a lightly equipped guerilla force, capable only of mobile, short-term operations, to a highly organized army capable of fighting, and winning, large-scale, positional battles. This same period was to see the Nationalist Army, with an initial preponderance of men and materiel, suffer a stunning series of defeats which could partly be attributed to the political and moral decay of the Nationalist Government. "It was, as Stuart Schram has so well characterized it, one of the most striking examples in history of the victory of a smaller but dedicated and well organized force enjoying popular support over a larger but unpopular force with poor morale and incompetent leadership" (5:50). But in August, 1945, not many people were visionary enough to foresee the victory of the communists in such a remarkably short time.

1945

Even prior to V-J Day, 2 September 1945, it was apparent that the end of the Sino-Japanese War would not bring peace to China. "In April, 1945, Mao Tse-tung had put both the Nationalists and foreign countries on notice that the communists would not accept a continuation of the Kuomintang's one-party dictatorship" (4:252). Even earlier, in 1941, Chiang Kai-shek's priorities became evident when he was quoted as saying: "The Japanese are a disease of the skin. The communists are a disease of the heart" (4:238).

Both sides had used the period of the Sino-Japanese War to prepare their forces for the upcoming struggle. Not only had the communists used the guerilla campaign against the Japanese to increase and toughen their forces, "they had won a potentially decisive contest: they had identified themselves with anti-imperialism, the chief wartime drive of the people" (4:254). Besides the increase in political goodwill brought about by their anti-Japanese activities and land reform programs, the communists had steadily increased the size of their forces. By August, 1945, the Red Army boasted a strength of approximately 900,000 regulars and over two million militia members (4:254).

The Nationalists, on the other hand, could field a much larger regular army, approximately two and one-half million men (2:44). "The elite of this army consisted of thirty-nine divisions which had been trained and equipped by the Americans" (2:44). In addition, the Kuomintang had the only naval forces, and had an American trained and equipped air force consisting of 200 fighters (P-40's and P-51's), 90 bombers (B-25's and B-24's), and 120 transport planes (C-47's) (2:48). Politically, the Nationalists were at a great disadvantage. "In a mass of official corruption, Chiang had stood as the incorruptible ascetic, but incapable or unwilling to stem the thievery and nepotism that engulfed the Nationalist Government and Army" (9:17-18). On the eve of the Civil War, corruption seemed to be the byword of most Nationalist public officials and many army officers.

From V-J Day through the end of 1945, most of the political effort was expended in attempts to stem the approach of war, while at the same time both sides engaged in a race to occupy Manchuria.

Politically, the two sides, with the help of American Ambassador Hurley, entered negotiations in an effort to form a coalition government. Initially, the negotiations achieved a measure of success, with the CCP even agreeing to the dominance of the Kuomintang. "Ambassador Hurley noted, however, that agreement was still lacking on (1) the right claimed by the communists to appoint governors [and] mayors in certain provinces, and (2) the number of communist troops to be included in the national peacetime army" (4:259). These points never were resolved.

Meanwhile, both sides were attempting to gain the upper hand in Manchuria. Not only rich in minerals, the area had been heavily industrialized by the Japanese, and both sides considered its control vital. Due to their position in northern China, the communists "had a strong head start over the Nationalists" (4:259). This advantage was soon offset by American assistance to the Nationalists. "The US Tenth Air Force...airlifted three Chinese armies, totalling 110,000 men, from the south to the north, in record time" (2:60).

By the end of 1945, the Nationalists had taken control of most of the key cities in southern Manchuria (many cities in central and northern Manchuria were still controlled by Russian occupation forces), but Lin Piao's Eighth Route Army controlled a majority of the surrounding countryside. In addition, they controlled two vital rail links which seriously handicapped logistical support of the crack armies that the Nationalists had moved into Manchuria.

The following year would generate another effort at reconciliation, but would also see a sharp increase in the level of conflict.

1946

The arrival of General George C. Marshall marked the beginning of a second attempt by the US government to mediate the growing conflict. President Truman's instructions "made it clear that General Marshall's mission would be essentially to take up where Hurley had left off" (4:263). A Committee of

Three was formed with General Marshall, Chou En-lai, and Nationalist General Chang Chih-chung, which met for the first time on 7 January. Immediate progress was made. "The committee agreed on the cessation, effective January 13, of all hostilities in China" (4:264). The committee continued to meet, along with the multi-party Political Consultative Conference, and by 25 February had reached agreement on most major problems. Unfortunately, "the agreement had hardly been signed when disorders broke out in Manchuria" (2:76).

In March, the departure of the remaining Russian occupation forces from Manchuria spawned another race for the newly opened areas. On 12 March Lin Piao's forces occupied Mukden, only to be driven out on the 13th. "The two sides now commenced to accuse each other of violating the truce" (2:77). On 15 April communist forces occupied the Manchurian capital of Changchun. On 23 May it was recaptured by Nationalist armored units. "With the Nationalist military position in Manchuria apparently improved, the Generalissimo [Chiang Kai-shek] made certain proposals on May 24 for the restoration of peace" (4:270). A truce became effective on 7 June. But things had progressed too far. "The truce arranged by Marshall expired on June 30, 1946, and the Civil War raged uninterrupted thereafter" (9:20).

The Nationalists now mounted major offensives in Shantung and Kiangsi Provinces. Nationalist forces still maintained a sizable superiority, but the rough edges were beginning to show. "Their morale was low, one was to witness inexplicable surrenders. For example, the 19th Brigade...and part of the Forty-ninth Army as well, laid down their arms without firing a shot" (2:85). The effects of decay in the Nationalist Government were beginning to make themselves felt. "Corruption infected the political administration, and from there the rot was transmitted to the military machine" (4:274). Although the Nationalists continued to take cities, it was at increasing cost.

Meanwhile, the communist units "were beginning to gather the fruits of the guerilla campaign, which not only served to keep their regular military forces intact, but, by severing communications, was separating the cities from the countryside and slowly driving the government into an economic crisis" (2:88-89).

Throughout the remainder of 1946, Nationalist forces continued to take cities while the Red Army continued to conserve its strength and increase its influence in rural areas. In summary, the Nationalist problem was:

The progress of the government forces had been deceptively easy. Even as they advanced, however, weaknesses showed up in the military situation that should have disturbed the Nationalist high command. The communist forces were using the tactic of mobile warfare, and the Nationalist armies were unable to force them into positional warfare for a decision. The Nationalists, taking town after town, became extended (4:278).

As 1947 approached "the Nationalist press services circulated a constant stream of victory bulletins. In reality, the communists were as strong as ever and the Kuomintang was digging its own grave" (9:100).

1947

The first half of 1947 was to see a continuation of the communist tactics of mobile and guerilla warfare. "In Manchuria, which was to become Chiang's strategic trap, the Reds launched diversionary offensives to draw and fix as many enemy divisions-which would be difficult for the Nationalists to resupply and reinforce-as possible" (2:112).

Lin Piao began these diversions in January, with a three column attack across the Sungari River. Although he quickly retired after a Nationalist counterattack, "it surprised the Nationalist command and introduced a new element of uncertainty into the situation" (4:280). Similar offensives were repeated on 21 February and again on 8 March.

Also in March, the Nationalists captured the town of Yen-an, the Chinese Communist capital. Despite being hailed in the national press as a great victory, "the communists had long since anticipated the attack and were well prepared to evacuate" (2:128). Meanwhile, the communists moved to expand their control over northern Shensi Province and established their headquarters there.

In May, Lin Piao again crossed the Sungari River, this time with 270,000 men. He succeeded in laying siege to Mukden and Kirin and cut several rail lines. The effect of this pressure was revealed in a report from the American Consul General at Mukden: "In the past two months the morale of the Nationalist forces has deteriorated at a rapidly accelerating pace....There is good evidence that apathy, resentment and defeatism are spreading fast in Nationalist ranks causing surrenders and desertions" (2:120).

The diversionary offensives of Lin Piao and the Eighth Route Army had become a major victory. By the time the rains halted his operations in July, the Nationalists had lost half their territory and two-thirds of their railroads. "By this offensive the communists had seized the initiative in Manchuria" (4:281).

Meanwhile, in other parts of China, the communists continued their use of mobile warfare. While Nationalist troops moved to increase their control over Shantung Province in the north, the communists began moving into the resulting power vacuum in central China.

The second half of 1947 saw the bulk of the fighting in Manchuria. Lin Piao launched offensives on 15 September, 1 October, and 15 December. By now, all but a few major cities and most of the rail lines belonged to the Red Army. As 1948 approached it was becoming clear to all except Chiang Kai-shek and a few other Nationalist die-hards, that unless some much needed changes were made, the end was fast approaching.

1948

At the beginning of 1948, although the Nationalist military position was deteriorating, they could still show a numerical superiority of 1,250,000 men versus the communists 700,000 (4:159).

There were two good reasons for this apparent dichotomy. First, the Red Army was able to use almost all of its troops for combat operations. "There being no need for the communists to guard conquered areas with regular troops, they could free such troops for further operations elsewhere; but Nationalist-conquered areas, because of guerilla activity and the hostility of the populace required enormous garrisons" (4:162). Although a great deal of credit for the communist's success in peasant relations must go to their land reform program, the behavior of the individual soldier was also a key factor. Red Army troops were under the strictest orders to always act correctly toward the peasants and to never interfere with village politics. This combination contributed to the fact that most peasants viewed the approaching Red Army as liberators, negating the need for communist troops to perform garrison duty.

Secondly, the communist soldier was generally a cut above his Nationalist counterpart. "The real strength of the communist armies was to be found...in their morale, their discipline and their leadership" (4:49). Compared to the ill-paid and ill-treated conscripts of the Nationalist army, who were rapidly developing a defensive, trench warfare mentality, the Red soldier had superior morale and a much more offensive spirit.

So despite what seemed like a disparity in numbers, as the communists approached anything like equal odds, the momentum quickly shifted in their favor. The year 1948 was to prove that point. "Reporting on December 25, 1947, to the CCP Central Committee, Mao Tse-tung exuded confidence: 'The Chinese people's revolutionary war has now reached a turning point.' The [Red Army] had assumed the offensive" (4:286).

Lin Piao resumed his attacks in Manchuria on 5 January. By 13 March, both Mukden and Changchun were completely isolated and could only be supplied by air. Although things would be quiet for the next couple of months, "one could sense that the last round in Manchuria was drawing near" (2:167).

In northern China, the communists began to consolidate their holdings. In April they recaptured the city of Yen-an, destroying five Nationalist brigades and dealing the Nationalists a major propaganda defeat. On 7 May the Reds captured the city of Loyang and on 17 May, Lifen fell. The capture of these two cities removed the last Nationalist elements from southern Shensi Province. In addition, the desperate requirement for reserves in Manchuria had forced the Nationalists to significantly weaken the Shantung Peninsula. Moving in against weak opposition, the Red Army managed to regain almost the entire peninsula by the end of April.

The changing face of the war became apparent during the second half of 1948. While action had been mainly limited to Manchuria and northern China during the past three years, "as of 1 July 1948, fully half the strength of both the communists and the Nationalists was in central China" (2:181).

Despite this shift in the main battle area, the first blow to the Nationalists came in Manchuria. On 12 September Lin Piao resumed the offensive. The Liaosi Corridor, the only escape route for the Nationalists, was quickly cut off. Disaster soon followed. In an attempt to reopen the corridor, 11

Nationalist divisions had been concentrated at Hulutao. But "a part of the Yunnan Ninety-third Army defected to the communists as soon as it was put in movement; the remainder of the force was left unused by a command fearful of its loyalty" (4:289). At Chinchow, eight divisions and five regiments surrendered on 15 October. At Changchun, the Yunnan Sixtieth Army defected to the communists on 17 October and fought against Nationalist troops the next day (4:289). On 20 October Changchun surrendered and, on 1 November, Mukden fell. Manchuria was now entirely in communist hands. In total, the fall of Manchuria cost the Nationalists seven field armies, 400,000 men.

Central China now became the focal point for the greatest battle the war was to see, "and it was here that Chiang Kai-shek's military power received its coup de grace" (4:290). By November all that was protecting the Yangtze River crossings and Nanking were the cities of Suchow and Anwei. Chu Teh amassed a force of 600,000 men for the assault on Suchow. To defend the city, Chiang Kai-shek also deployed 600,000 troops, including his treasured armored corps and the last of his American trained divisions. The battle began on 7 November and lasted for 65 days. The devastation of the Nationalist forces was complete. "The Nationalists had lost five army groups, seven other full divisions, the armored corps, and miscellaneous other units beside-approximately 550,000 men" (4:291).

The power of the Nationalists and Chiang Kai-shek were broken forever. All that was left was the consolidation of communist gains and the mopping up of remaining Nationalist forces.

1949

The next nine months would mark the death knell of the Nationalist Government and the formal ascendancy of the People's Republic of China.

"On January 8, 1949, the National Government requested the intervention of the American, British, French and Soviet governments" (4:294). They all turned a deaf ear. On 14 January the communists submitted a list of eight conditions for a peaceful settlement. "Nationalist compliance with these demands would have been tantamount to unconditional surrender" (2:215). On 21 January, in an effort to appease the communists, Chiang Kai-shek turned over power to Vice President Li Tsung-jen. Mao, undeterred, continued to press for acceptance of his eight conditions.

Negotiations continued until 20 April when the last of Mao's deadlines passed, with the Nationalists still refusing to accept the conditions. On 20 April the Red Army crossed the Yangtze River and began its final operations of the Civil War.

Nanking fell on 23 April and Shanghai on 27 May. In November, Suijan Province surrendered along with all of Sikiang. The Nationalist Government fled to Canton, and then to Chungking, and finally to Chengtu, the capital of Szechuan Province.

On 1 October, 1949, the People's Republic of China was formally installed in Peking, and in December the last remnants of the Nationalist Government fled to Formosa.

The long, arduous journey that had begun 15 years ago, when 100,000 men and women had been forced to begin the Long March, was finally over. For the few who survived it, the legacy of the Long March had led to the conquest of a nation.

Chapter Five

THE LONG MARCH LEGACY

There can be little doubt that the 368 days of the Long March were a brutal, tortuous experience for those few who survived it. It was even more of a tragedy considering that there were so few survivors from the number who participated in the March. No one will ever know how many marchers died in battle, drowned at the many river crossings, froze to death in the Great Snow Mountains or simply disappeared beneath the Grasslands. But the misery and death were not entirely in vain, for the Long March marked the turning point in the revolution.

There were three results of the Long March which directly contributed to the communist victory in 1949. The first was the ascendancy of Mao Tse-tung to the leadership of the CCP. The second was the reaffirmation to the doctrine of guerilla and mobile warfare. Finally, the Long March produced a spirit of dedication among the survivors which they would pass to all those who joined the revolution.

THE LEADERSHIP OF MAO

Mao Tse-tung's belief that only rural peasants could be used as the basis for a successful revolution in China had cost him dearly during his early revolutionary days. But as events transpired, it was the communists' ability to win over the peasant which was the key to victory. Mao's precepts of correct treatment of peasants by Red Army troops and land reform, ensured rural support for the Red Army.

The support of the rural poor was to be a major asset to Red forces, especially during the early years of the Civil War. They not only provided support and safe havens, but their docility in the rear areas allowed Red Army commanders to realize the maximum combat power from their numerically inferior forces.

Mao's ability to see China for what it was turned out to be the key to his uniqueness.

It is most unlikely that orthodox Marxist-Leninists could have appreciated fully the revolutionary opportunities afforded by the wartime situation, much less acted on them to build a communist movement on a purely peasant base. It was precisely Mao's ideological unorthodoxies that allowed the communists to seize upon these opportunities (5:45).

Coinciding with Mao's rise to power, the Long March produced a valuable lesson re-learned which would prove to be a major contributor to the defeat of the Nationalists, the return to mobile and guerilla warfare.

MOBILE/GUERILLA WARFARE

The defeat of the First Front Army at the Kiangsi Soviet during Chiang Kai-shek's Fifth Annihilation Campaign and the disaster at the Hsiang River crossing came perilously close to eradicating the First Front Army before the Long March had really begun. Both of these defeats had been precipitated by the abandonment of Mao and Chu Teh's proven practices of mobile and guerilla warfare.

The re-adoption of this doctrine after the Hsiang River debacle constituted, not only the sole hope for the First Front Army to make good its escape, but the only strategy capable of defeating the Nationalists during the Civil War. When hostilities began in 1945, the Red Army faced an adversary with a marked superiority in manpower, an overwhelming preponderance of materiel, and complete mastery of the air. Despite this imbalance, the communists managed to inflict several key defeats on Nationalist forces during the early years of the war. The reasons for these victories were best summed up by General Albert Wedemeyer, Chief of the US Military Advisory Group in China, in a 1947 report to President Truman: "These [communist] successes can be attributed mainly to the lightness and efficacy of their hit-and-run guerilla type forces...." (2:144).

Although the final battles were fought using conventional tactics, the ability to conduct conventional warfare was available only after a protracted period of guerilla warfare. The mobile tactics of the Red Army allowed it to remain intact, while at the same time, it began to bleed the Nationalist economy and buy time for the internal corruption of the Nationalist Government to aid in its own downfall.

The ability to successfully prosecute guerilla warfare requires high morale and dedication to overcome the hardship this type of warfare entails. The most intangible result of the Long March was the development of the Long March spirit.

THE LONG MARCH SPIRIT

Throughout the course of the Civil War, the morale of the Red soldier was consistently superior to that of the conscripts of the Nationalist Army. This proved to be a significant factor during the first two and one-half years of the war when the communists were so heavily outmanned.

The requisite zeal and dedication required to undergo the rigors of protracted guerilla warfare were developed and passed on to others, by the survivors of the Long March. "For those who survived the ordeal-and for those who were inspired by the story of their survival-the experience, however

bitter it was at the time, gave rise to a renewed sense of hope and a deepened sense of mission" (5:34). This heightened sense of revolutionary ardor was contagious to those exposed to it and later became known as the Yen'an spirit. "This psychological legacy went into the making of Yen'an Communism and manifested itself in a very special commitment to carry on the revolutionary struggle" (5:35).

CONCLUSION

The Long March began in confusion and defeat but ended in victory. The victory may have not been apparent to the few villagers who watched the 8,000 bedraggled survivors arrive at the end of their trek, but victory it surely was. Out of the misery and tragedy that marked the Long March were born the leadership, the strategy, and the dedication that would sweep the Nationalists into the sea in 1949 and conquer the world's most populous nation. The impact of the Long March is still being felt today and truly deserves Edgar Snow's characterization as "an Odyssey unequalled in modern times" (8:177).

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